
Tonbridge Vauxhall	559068 145228	10 October 2013	TM/13/03128/FL
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Proposal:	Construction of a floodlit synthetic turf pitch, including fencing, on school playing fields
Location:	Tonbridge Grammar School For Girls Deakin Leas Tonbridge Kent TN9 2JR
Applicant:	Tonbridge Grammar School For Girls

1. Description:

- 1.1 The proposed pitch would be located on the existing grassed hockey pitches located to the south of the school buildings. The area of the pitch measures 101m x 63m. It would be laid out either as a single hockey pitch playing length ways, or two separate hockey pitches playing width ways. A six lane athletics sprint strip would also be located along the northern side of the pitch. It is intended for the pitch to be used for football and athletics as well as hockey. The pitch could also be used as tennis courts during the summer. However, the pitch could not be used for all of these activities at any one time.
- 1.2 The pitch would be surrounded by dark green plastic coated weld mesh fencing measuring 3m high, although the sections behind the goals would measure 4.5m high.
- 1.3 In addition to use by the school for different sports, it is intended for the proposed pitch to be available for use by certain community groups outside school hours. The applicant has already received expressions of interest from the following groups to use the proposed pitch:
 - Weald of Kent School
 - The Judd School
 - K College
 - Sevenoaks Hockey Club
 - Edenbridge Hockey Club
 - Black Knights
 - Hillview School
 - Tonbridge Athletics Club
 - Tunbridge Wells Hockey Club

5. Consultees:

- 5.1 KCC (Highways): The new pitch would replace an existing sports pitch and would attract in the region of 45 visitors during weekday evenings. The information submitted indicates that there are 70 parking spaces on site and the peak period for the community use would be Tuesday and Wednesday evenings when up to 95 visitors would be on site for dance, netball and hockey (including the new pitch). Allowing for joint trips, participants being dropped off and those walking, the level of parking provision is considered to be adequate. The additional traffic generated by the new pitch would not be likely to lead to any significant congestion or safety problems on the adjoining highway. In view of the above, I can confirm that I do not wish to raise objection.
- 5.2 EA: We have assessed this application as having a low environmental risk. We therefore have no comments to make.
- 5.3 Private Reps (including responses to site and press notices): 30/1X/0S/21R. The 21 responses raise the following objections to this proposal:
- The use should be for the school's use only.
 - The use of the pitch by community groups would cause excessive noise at times when local residents expect peace (evenings and weekends).
 - Noise would be caused by the arrival and departure of the player's vehicles, their training staff, supporters, friends and families, as well as noise arising from the use of the pitch and supporters.
 - There are no changing facilities for the community groups, which means that community users would have to change around their vehicles, lengthening the time that people would be within the site.
 - If the pitch is allowed to be used for community groups, a far stricter window of use should be allowed.
 - Consideration must be given to the fact that disturbance to neighbouring properties is not just limited to the times when the pitch is in use, but before and after as well.
 - The flood lights will cause light pollution to nearby residential properties.
 - No collaboration has been undertaken by the developer with local residents, as is recommended in the NPPF.
 - There is a surplus of hockey pitches in the local area and the proposal is not required.

- The noise survey does not assess the noise impact upon the nearest residential properties, which are located in Taylors Close.
- The use by community groups would have an adverse impact upon the parking arrangements in Deakin Leas.
- The use of the pitch by community groups has to be considered alongside the use of the school's dance studio after school hours by a dance school and other groups who also rent space within the school (such as hosting 11+ exams).
- No additional car parking is proposed.
- The pitch would result in the loss of the existing open space with no land to compensate for this loss.
- The pitch would damage the character of this low density residential area.
- The school presently has difficulties with regulating the opening and closing of gates leaving users waiting in the Deakin Leas, early in the morning.
- The data contained within the noise assessment does not tally with the proposed operating hours specified within the application forms.
- Loss of wildlife habitat.
- The pitch would have an adverse impact upon privacy and pose a potential security risk.

6. Determining Issues:

- 6.1 It must be remembered that a development of much the same character has previously been approved for this site. (That permission was granted by Kent County Council). Whilst that permission is no longer extant (it expired in November 2013), it is none the less a material consideration indicating the acceptability in principle of such a facility.
- 6.2 Policy CP 11 of the TMBCS states that development should be concentrated within the confines of urban areas, including Tonbridge
- 6.3 The existing playing field within this school site is identified as an open space to which policy OS 1 of the MDEDPD relates. This policy states that development which would result in the loss or reduce the recreational, nature conservation, bio-diversity, landscape amenity and/or historic value of such open spaces will not be permitted unless a replacement site is provided. The playing field is clearly a recreational space used by the school. The proposed development is for an all

weather sports pitch that can be used all year round. Consequently, the proposed development would not result in the loss of the existing recreational open space within this site.

- 6.4 Policy CP 24 of the TMBCS requires all developments to be well designed and through such matters as scale, siting, character and appearance be designed to respect the site and its surroundings. Local residents have objected to the visual impact of the proposed pitch upon the character of the existing playing field, (including the impact of the proposed flood lights and fencing).
- 6.5 The pitch would be located within the grounds of a school on land that is currently marked out and used as sports pitches. The pitch would also be located within an area of the school grounds that is not visually prominent from public vantage points. In this context, the proposed pitch and its fencing would not cause unacceptable harm to the visual amenity of the locality in my opinion. Furthermore, whilst the floodlight columns would measure 15m in height, in the context of an established high school site containing large buildings, I do not consider their impact would be significantly detrimental upon either residential amenity in the form of light pollution or upon the character of the wider area. They would also not be significantly different from the previously approved scheme.
- 6.6 Many of the objections raised to the proposed development focus on the proposed community use of the proposed pitch and do not object to the school's use of this facility. The primary planning issues associated with the community use of the pitch relate to noise/ disturbance that may be caused to local residents and added detriment to the safe and free flow of traffic using Deakin Leas.
- 6.7 Initially, the hours of use for the pitch caused significant concern with local residents, particularly the weekday evening finishing time of 9.30pm as originally proposed. However, following negotiations with the applicant's agent, the finishing time has now been revised to 8.00pm. This is, of course, the same weekday evening finishing time as was previously approved by Kent County Council in dealing with the previous proposal in 2010. An 8.00pm weekday evening finishing time for the use of the pitch is considered to be reasonable and would not result in unreasonable noise disturbance to local residents in my opinion. The neighbours living adjacent to the site access would notice activity shortly after this finishing time as players leave the site via the sole vehicular access to Deakin Leas. However, even accounting for an extra 15 minutes or so for players to leave the site after the pitch use ceases, I am satisfied that the proposal would not cause unacceptable detriment to local residents at un-social hours of the evening. Similarly the weekend hours proposed are 8.30am to 6.00pm on Saturdays and 9.30am to 6.00pm on Sundays and Bank Holidays. Allowing for a 15 minute window on either side of these operating times for people to arrive before and leave after the pitch use, these operating times would not result in activities at unreasonable times of the day in my opinion. The hours of use of the pitch can be controlled by conditions, should Members be minded to grant planning permission.

- 6.8 Due to the nature of the proposed development, there is potential for noise disturbance caused not only by the arrival and departure of the participants and spectators, but also noise from the actual use of the pitch itself (from players and spectators). The submitted noise reports have been criticised because the hours of the day when noise levels were assessed did not tally with the proposed hours of use of the pitch. However, revised acoustic reports have now been submitted which contain sufficient information for the Council to assess the impact of the noise generated by the use of the pitch upon the amenity of local residents.
- 6.9 This shows that the noise levels arising from the use of the pitch would be between 1.3 dB and 3.8dB above the existing background noise levels at the site's boundaries with residential properties within Deakin Leas and Vauxhall Gardens. At the boundary of Taylors Close the predicted noise levels arising from the use of the proposed pitch are between 4.5 dB (weekend day) and 6.7dB (weekday evening). It is generally recognised that the human ear cannot readily discern a change in noise levels of less than 3dB. The predicted noise levels at the boundaries of the residential properties in Deakin Leas and Vauxhall Gardens would not, therefore, be significantly noticeable than existing background noise levels. The noise generated by the pitch would be more noticeable within the properties in Taylor Close. However, due to the now proposed operating hours for the pitch, the amenity of these neighbouring properties is not considered to be adversely affected by the likely noise levels generated though the use of the sports pitch.
- 6.10 With regard to the proposed flood lighting, the applicant has confirmed that the lighting would be controlled by a digital timer. It can be required by condition to be switched off at an appropriate time. The lighting has also been specifically designed to illuminate the pitch itself with little overspill beyond it. Indeed the submitted information indicates that the effect of the lighting at the boundaries with neighbouring residential properties would be minimal. I am satisfied, therefore, that the proposed flood lighting would not cause unacceptable harm to the amenities of neighbouring residential properties.
- 6.11 Much concern has been expressed by local residents regarding the cumulative impact of the proposed development and existing extra-curricular school events upon the amenities of local residents. This relates to congestion caused by parents and other users of the school facilities during different times of the day/day of the week and the resulting general disturbance/disruption to local residents caused by this. Information has been submitted by local residents regarding the school's range of extracurricular activities that currently occurs. Indeed, it has been reported by local residents that during a recent parents' evening, gridlock occurred within Deakin Leas due to apparently inconsiderate driving by parents trying to access the school, which included people stopping or parking across residents' driveways preventing them from accessing their own properties. It would appear from local residents' comments regarding this application that this was not an isolated incident.

- 6.12 In light of the existing problems that local residents face, they are concerned that the proposed usage of the pitch would add to the existing levels of disruption and harm to their amenity as additional groups of people will be visiting the school to use the pitch. The school has been asked to clarify the nature and use of the proposed pitch by community groups in order that the Council can assess as accurately as possible the potential intensity of use and possible impacts of the proposed development upon the amenities of local residents in terms of added disruption/inconvenience/noise when people would be arriving at or leaving the site. The range of specific uses on particular evenings will no doubt affect the numbers of people using the proposed facility and therefore the potential local impact through intensity of comings and goings. Additionally, there could be times when the use of the pitch could coincide with parents' evenings or other school events which could create a "perfect storm" scenario for local residents, which could be detrimental to their amenity. Ideally, we would guard against such eventualities.
- 6.13 However, the school has not yet been able to clarify the precise details of what organisations would be using the pitch, how long each session would last and how each session would be used by a particular community group (such as a hockey match, hockey training session, football match etc). Whilst it is important to know this information, the school has not been able to provide this level of detail at this time. Nevertheless, a condition can be added to a planning permission for the pitch that would require details of the community use to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This would also include a requirement for the school to include a mechanism to continually review the approved community use scheme. It could also include the prohibition of non-school use coinciding with major school events. This would enable the provision of the pitch to be agreed in principle and for the school to make use of it for its own educational purposes whilst preparing full details of the intended community use prior to its actual use by the community groups.
- 6.14 In recommending this approach regarding the community use issues, I am mindful of the fact that no objection to the proposed development has been raised by the Highway Authority. It also has to be borne in mind that a similar proposal for the same size of sports pitch was granted planning permission for this site in 2010 by Kent County Council when the school was still under the control of the Local Education Authority. Permission has, therefore, already been granted in recent years in the context of the same Development Plan that applies today, for essentially the same development as is currently proposed. It is also the case that a condition similar to the one I am proposing in relation to the submission for approval of a scheme relating to community use was imposed on that permission by the County Council. It also must be considered that the school can make use of its existing facilities outside of school operating hours, for a number of activities that do not require planning permission from the local planning authority and which can and do cause congestion and inconvenience to local residents. However, it is,

of course, important to seek to ensure that the proposal does not cause significant further detriment to amenity than already occurs, hence my reference to the use of a condition to control the community use.

- 6.15 The users of the proposed sports pitch would be allowed to park within the school grounds where there are 70 spaces currently available. The revised operating hours of the sports pitch are such that school staff will have vacated the site before the community use of the sports pitch commences at 6.00pm on weekday evenings, leaving the car parking spaces for those using the sports pitch and other school facilities outside school hours. The current adopted Vehicle Parking Standards show that the level of car parking required to serve the proposed pitch will vary depending upon how many participants are using it at any one time. For the use of the proposed pitch for a hockey match, 20 car parking spaces would be required. If it were to host 2 five-a-side football matches at once, 16 car parking spaces would be required. The school has referred to the use of the pitch for 12 tennis courts. This would require 34 car parking spaces to be provided (based on a maximum of 48 players and a similar level of spectators being on site at the same time).
- 6.16 The school has submitted information that shows the different activities that are currently being undertaken within the site (outside school hours), the level of car parking used by those activities and that predicted to be associated with the use of the proposed pitch. (The school has assumed an average use of 30 car parking spaces being occupied by the users of the proposed pitch). Based on the information submitted by the school and the Council's adopted Vehicle Parking Standards, it is considered that an adequate level of car parking would be available within the site to serve the community use of the proposed pitch. However, I would recommend the use of a condition requiring 35 of the existing car parking spaces to be made available for use by those using the proposed pitch. Requiring details of the community use of the pitch to be submitted to and approved by the Borough Council would also help the school to plan its use with a view to minimising the times when other school users would be competing for the remaining parking spaces.
- 6.17 The proposed development would not require the removal of any trees within the site and the pitch would stand outside the Root Protection Area of the trees that stand along the southern and western boundaries of the site. The submitted arboricultural assessment recommends that tree protection fencing be erected during the course of construction.
- 6.18 In conclusion, whilst the concerns expressed by local residents are entirely understandable, it is considered that the provision of the pitch itself and use by the school would not cause significant harm to their amenity, the character of the locality or indeed highway safety. Furthermore, I consider that with careful planning and management the proposed pitch could also be used outside school times by community groups without causing additional significant detriment to the

amenities of the local residents, but this would have to be satisfactorily demonstrated by the school before the community use could take place. In light of these considerations and for the other reasons set out in this report, I consider that on balance, permission should be granted for this development subject to certain conditions limiting the use of this facility.

7. Recommendation:

7.1 Grant Planning permission in accordance with the following submitted details:

Letter dated 13.01.2014, Other PARKING SCHEDULE dated 13.01.2014, Letter ADDITIONAL INFO dated 13.01.2014, Letter ADDITIONAL INFO dated 13.01.2014, Noise Assessment dated 16.12.2013, Letter dated 16.12.2013, Documents TERMS AND CONDITIONS dated 16.12.2013, Documents TIME TABLE dated 16.12.2013, Arboricultural Survey AR/3064/JQ dated 10.10.2013, Design and Access Statement dated 10.10.2013, Planning Statement dated 10.10.2013, Supporting Statement dated 10.10.2013, Waste Management Strategy dated 10.10.2013, Lighting DETAILS dated 10.10.2013, Photograph dated 10.10.2013, Location Plan SCC/TGS/101 dated 10.10.2013, Existing Site Layout dated 10.10.2013, Proposed Layout dated 10.10.2013, Site Plan SCC/TGS/102 dated 10.10.2013, Floor Plan SCC/TGS/103 dated 10.10.2013, Drainage Layout SCC/TGS/104 dated 10.10.2013, Elevations SCC/TGS/105 dated 10.10.2013, Section SCC/TGS/106 dated 10.10.2013, Section SCC/TGS/108 dated 10.10.2013, Email dated 22.01.2014, Noise Assessment dated 23.01.2014, subject to the following:

Conditions / Reasons

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In pursuance of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. All materials used externally shall accord with the approved plans, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the development does not harm the character and appearance of the existing building or visual amenity of the locality.

3. No development shall take place until details of existing and proposed pitch levels, and any levelling works to be undertaken have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority, and the work shall be carried out in strict accordance with those details.

Reason: To ensure that the development does not harm the character and appearance of the existing building or visual amenity of the locality.

4. The flood lighting hereby permitted shall be installed and set up as detailed in the LTL Contracts report dated 11.06.2009, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In order to protect the amenity of nearby residential properties.

5. All flood lighting within the site must be extinguished by 20.15 Monday to Friday and by 18.15 on Saturdays, Sundays, Bank and Public holidays, or within 15 minutes after last use of the sports pitches, whichever is the sooner.

Reason: In order to protect the amenity of nearby residential properties.

6. The flooding lighting hereby permitted shall be completely extinguished when the sport pitches are not in use.

Reason: In order to protect the amenity of nearby residential properties.

7. The sports pitch hereby approved shall not be used outside the hours of 08.30 to 20.00 Mondays to Fridays, 08.30 to 18.00 on Saturdays or 09.30 to 18.00 Sundays, Public and Bank Holidays unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To avoid unreasonable disturbance outside normal working hours to nearby residential properties.

8. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the tree protection measures specified within section 10 of the Quaife Woodlands Arboricultural Report dated 2nd October 2013, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: Pursuant to section 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and to protect the appearance and character of the site and wider locality.

9. The use of the pitch other than by the applicant shall not commence until details of a Community Use scheme have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include details of time-tabling, access by non-Tonbridge Girls Grammar School users, management responsibilities and shall include a mechanism for reviewing the approved scheme. The scheme shall be implemented upon the first use of the pitch by non-Tonbridge Girls Grammar School users and shall be adhered to at all times thereafter unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To minimise detriment to the amenities of nearby residential properties.

10. The use of the pitch other than by the applicant shall not commence until details showing the provision of at least 35 car parking spaces within the application site to be made available for users of the pitch outside of school hours have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The relevant car parking spaces shall be clearly marked out on site as being only for

the users of the pitch outside school hours, prior to the first use of the pitch by non- Tonbridge Girls Grammar School users and shall only be used by the users of the pitch hereby approved.

Reason: To protect the amenities of the locality and in the interests of highway safety.

- 11 If during development, contamination not previously identified, is found to be present at the site then no further development (unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority) shall be carried out until the developer has submitted and obtained written approval from the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and public safety.

Informative

- 1 During construction the applicant is strongly advised to restrict hours of work to 08.00 to 18.00 Monday to Friday, 08.00 to 13.00 Saturdays with no work on Sundays and Public Holidays. Therefore, the applicant is advised to apply for Prior Consent pursuant to the provisions of Section 60 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 from the Director of Health and Housing (Pollution Control).
- 2 The applicant is advised to adopt considerate construction techniques for the duration of the development in order to minimise any detriment caused to local residents. For example, the applicant is advised to park all construction and worker's vehicles within the school grounds and employ measures to reduce dust nuisance beyond the site and to avoid vehicles leaving the site depositing mud or other materials on the public highway.

Contact: Matthew Broome